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Message Text

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ACTION AF-10

INFO OCT-01 EUR-12 NEA-10 ISO-00 IO-13 CIAE-00 DODE-00
PM-04 H-01 INR-07 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01
PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15 USIA-06 TRSE-00 /091 W
----------038471 132100Z /75
R 131600Z JUL 77
FM AMEMBASSY NOUAKCHOTT
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 7782
INFO AMEMBASSY ALGIERS
AMEMBASSY BAMAKO
AMEMBASSY DAKAR
AMEMBASSY JIDDA
AMEMBASSY MADRID
AMEMBASSY MADRID
AMEMBASSY PARIS
AMEMBASSY RABAT
USMISSION USUN
CINCEUR

C O N F I D E N T I A L NOUAKCHOTT 1594

CINCEUR FOR POLAD

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: MOPS, SS, MR, AG
SUBJECT: SAHARA WATCH: PERSPECTIVES ON ZOUERATE

REF: (A) NOUAKCHOTT 985, (B) NOUAKCHOTT 1026, (C) NOUAKCHOTT 1033

1. WIDESPREAD TENDENCY AMONG LOCAL SAHARA WATCHERS TO COMPARE AND CONTRAST JULY 3 ATTACK ON NOUAKCHOTT TO MAY 1 ATTACK ON ZOUERATE (REFTELS) HAS SURFACED NUMBER OF DETAILS ABOUT EARLIER POLISARIO OPERATION WHICH PUT BOTHPOLISARIO ACTIONS AND MAURITANIAN GOVERNMENT (GIRM) RESPONSES INTO ILLUMINATING PERSPECTIVE.

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2. FOLOWING COMES FROM FRENCH AMBASSADOR AND FRENCH MILITARY ATTACHE:

(A) PRIME OBJECTIVE OF POLISARIO ATTACK ON ZOUERATE WAS KIDNAPPING OF SUBSTANTIAL NJMBER OF KEY, SENIOR MAURITANIAN EMPLOYEES OF COMINOR, IRGNORE MINING SUBSIDIARY OF SOCIETE NATIONALE INDUSTRIELLE ET MINIERE (SNIM), GIRM INDUSTRIAL

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HOLDING COMPANY, IN ORDER TO HALT OR CRIPPLE IRON ORE EXPORTING OPERATION. POLISARIO APPEARED TO HAVE LIST OF DOZEN MAURITANIAN SUPERVIOSORS/SKILLED WORKERS (BY IMPLICATION, COMPLETE WITH ADDRESSES), (COMMENT: POLISARIO LOCATED AND TOOK FOUR MAURITANIANS, REF C.)

(B) FIRST POLISARIO ASSAULT WAVE CONSISTED OF EXUBERANT, PARTIALLY TRAINED YOUNG TROOPS FIRING WILDLY, MOSTLY INTO AIR. SECOND WAVE CONSISTED OF OLDER, EXPERIENCED, SINGLE-MINDED, MILITARY PROFESSIONALS WHO PROCEEDED SYSTEMATICALLY ABOUT THEIR BUSINESS AND WHO FIRED ONLY FOR SPECIFIC PURPOSE. "WE" (MAURITANIAN AND/OR FRENCH AUTHORITIES) HAVE EVIDENCE OF PRESENCE AND PARTICIPATION OF PROFESSIONAL ALGERIAN MILITARY IN SECOND GROUP. THERE WERE ALSO NUMBER OF BLACK, SPANISH-SPEAKING SOLDIERS IN SECOND GROUP. FRENCH HYPOTHESIS, ADMITTELDY UNSUPPORTED ZZ HARD EVIDENCE, IS THESE MEN WSJE CUBANS ON GROUNDS THEREARE NO BLACKS IN SAHRAWI POPULATION AND BLACKS WHO MIGHT HAVE BEEN RECRUITED FROM OTHER SECTORS OF DESERT DO NOT SPEAK SPANISH. (COMMENT: WE ARE INTENSELY SKEPTICAL. SEPARATING BLACK ARABS FROM SUB-SAHARAN BLACK AFRICANS TAKES CLOSE OBSERVATION, PRACTICED EYE, AND BRIGHT LIGHT: PROCESS IS AT BEST ONLY EDUCATED GUESS UNTIL CONVERSATION REVEALS CULTURAL HERITAGE OF TARGET INDIVIDUAL. SINCE SAHRAWIS ARE IDENTICAL TO MAURITANIAN MOORS IN MOST RESPECTS, THEY PROBABLY HAVE ROUGHLY EQUAL PERCENTAGE OF BLACK ARABS (EX SLAVES OR MEMBERS OF COLLATERAL TRIBES) IN THEIR MIDST, SOME OF WHOM CONFIDENTIAL

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UNDOUBTEDLY LEARNED SPANISH DURING COLONIAL PERIOD.)

(C) SECOND WAVE OF PROFESSIONAL TROOPERS MOVED SYSTEMATICALLY THROUGH RESIDENTIAL AREAS OF ZOUERATE IN SEARCH OF THEIR MAURITANIAN KIDNAPPING TARGETS5/ TROOPERS FIRED AT HOUSES OCCUPIED BY EUROPEANS ONLY WHEN THEY SAW INHABITANTS WATCHING THEM, AND THEN ONLY TO FRIGHTEN THEM AWAY FROM WINDOWS. (THEY FIRED PATTERN INTO WALL AROUND WINDOW; THEY DID NOT FIRE INTO WINDOW).

(D) FRENCH AMBASSADOR IS PERSONALLY CONVINCED THAT KIDNAPPING OF FRENCH HOSTAGES WAS NOT RPT NOT PLANNED, BUT WAS TACTICAL DECISIONTAKEN BY UNIT COMMANDER ON SPOT TO COPE WITH PROBLEM (THREAT TO MISSION SECURITY) POSED BY AIRLEECT ATTACK UNIT HAVING STUMBLED INTO SIX VARIOUSLY INTOXICATED FRENCH NATIONALS IN AIRPORT BAR AT 0520 HOURS. HAD ALL NIGHT PARTY-ERS BEEN HOME IN BED, THERE WOULD BE NO FRENCH NATIONALS IN POLISARIO HANDS IN ALGERIA.

(E) FRENCH PHYSICIAN AND HIS WIFE WOULD NOT BE DEAD IF THEY HAD OBEYED PMISAGMO ORDER TO HALT. RECONSTRUCTING INCIDENT, DOCTOR DISREGARDED ORDER TO STOP; POLISARIO FIRED AT AND PUNCTURED TIRES OF CAR; DOCTOR CONTINUED ON; POLISARIO RAISED

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SIGHTS AND FIRED AT CAR; WHEN DOCTOR FINALLY HALTED AND BURST
OUT OF CAR, POLISARCO FIRED AT HIM.

HANDYSIDE

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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: X
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Decaption Date: 01-Jan-1960 12:00:00 am
Decaption Note:
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 22 May 2009
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